

MODERN METHODS IN TEACHING GEOGRAPHY

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

THE World War gave a new impetus to the movement, which for a decade previous to the outbreak of that titanic struggle had been slowly gaining headway in our more progressive school systems, to shift the emphasis in the teaching of geography from descriptive and place geography to relational and interpretative geography. A new interest in other lands and peoples and places was awakened by the outbreak of the war. Interrupted production and transportation and construction brought world relationships and the interdependence of peoples before us in a way that had not before been understood. Maps and atlases and globes come in for a new use, by both adults and school pupils. During the war a reality was given to the teaching of geography which had not before been experienced, and at its close the children in our schools were called upon to aid in clothing and feeding peoples in distant lands, some of whom had previously been enemies, in a way that motivated many a school project and led to vitalized instruction in world affairs and world relationships.

Because of this new interest on the part of our people and the hearty response of the children in our schools to appeals for aid, teachers and supervisors alike came to realize the increased effectiveness of instruction that

can be related to current events in which every one is interested. New national interests and new international conceptions were brought out by the work, with the result that the study of world problems in the light of the home setting came in for a new emphasis with geography teachers. Our joining the Allies changed our former position as to the struggle, and later in world affairs as well, and our seat at the peace conference table was an experience of large importance in the thinking of the American people. The many new problems that arose during and following the war gave emphasis to social as well as material and political needs, and they bid fair in time to influence deeply the instruction in many school subjects. The teaching of geography, in particular, has already been much altered in both direction and purpose.

With the coming of peace, teachers of geography were unwilling to return to the old descriptive and place geography, taught from a standardized outline and the same for all classes. Having learned a new and a more vital method of teaching the subject, both teachers and supervisors have since been insistent upon flexibility in work and assignment, the use of current-events teaching to motivate the instruction, the study of types and projects and problems, the use of much illustrative material, and a new emphasis on the social and political rather than the physical and locational aspects of geography teaching. The teaching of this subject in our elementary schools has thus been

changed from a scientific study of the earth and its inhabitants into a social study involving a broad acquaintance with the lives and industries and achievements of the leading peoples of the earth, and the principal reasons why the different nations and peoples are as they are. Geographical facts and principles are still to be studied, but are to be used to interpret human-welfare problems and the interdependence of peoples. In addition to the textbooks which form the basis for instructional work, teachers now make much use of newspapers, current periodicals, books of travel and description, and maps and illustrated circulars, and seek to train their pupils more in library habits and problem-solving than in the memorization of geographic facts. While the importance of home geography and a study of our own country are emphasized now more than before, the importance of the United States in its relation to the other nations of the world is set forth as well and in a new way.

This change in aims and purposes and objectives in geography teaching has called for a new skill on the part of the teacher to enable her to handle the subject in the new way in the classroom and to correlate the instruction with the other subjects in the curriculum. Wider reading and a broader acquaintance with geographical and historical facts is demanded, a new knowledge of political and social relationships is needed, and new skill in handling vital social problems is called for. The ability to direct problem-solving experiences on

the part of young people, to help them to see the problem in its proper setting, and to cultivate an intelligent sympathy by removing prejudices through the better understanding of other peoples — all these are to-day regarded as a part of a geography teacher's equipment. Still more, the ability to impart the more important geographic facts in a way that leads to a sympathetic understanding of nature, geographic types, intercommunication, trade and industry, economic relationships, and the natural resources of the earth is also called for, and called for in a way that requires a wider knowledge and a broader understanding of fundamental geographic facts than ever before.

One may truthfully say that the teaching of geography with us has been transformed, within the past decade, largely as a result of the experiences of the World War, and that both textbooks and books on methods of the pre-war period on the subject are no longer of importance. Instead, the teacher of to-day in our American schools needs a new type of guidance and helpfulness in geographical instruction, and a new orientation as to the aims and purposes and objectives of the work to be done. It is this new technique of geographical instruction that the two authors of the present volume have herein set forth, and it is believed that the results of their work will prove very helpful to methods classes in teacher-training institutions and to teachers of the subject in our schools.

ELLWOOD P. CUBBERLEY

PREFACE

THREE viewpoints have been combined in the preparation of this book. The first is that of the classroom teacher of geography, the second that of the research worker, and the third that of a university professor of education. The book had its beginning in the practical classroom experience of one of the authors, who felt that a new knowledge as to methods, devices, and principles was very much needed for the guidance of present-day geography teachers. Growing out of this conviction came a master's thesis investigation conducted along the line of job analysis, and consisting of the following steps:

(1) A rather extended list of difficulties involved in the teaching of geography was made by consulting the writer's experience, and by interviewing a considerable number of geography teachers.

(2) This list of difficulties was classified into somewhat less than a score of major difficulties which seemed to be of great importance.

(3) Methods of solving these difficulties were collected by consulting the available books and articles on geography teaching, and by means of personal interviews with a large number of geography teachers.

(4) The materials so collected were classified according to the difficulties to which they were solutions, and submitted as a master's thesis in the School of

Education at the University of Southern California.

Using the material assembled in the above manner, the writer of the thesis and the professor who directed the work undertook to reorganize and amplify the original volume and so make the methods available for other teachers. Rather thoroughgoing changes were made in order to adapt the work to the new purpose and to avoid technical matters which are inherent in a thesis report. Very much of the viewpoint of modern educational theory has been added to the practical methods assembled from the teachers of geography, and no small amount of personal judgment on the part of the authors has been introduced by way of evaluating the methods presented. In case of controversial questions or alternative procedures for the solving of particular difficulties, the writers have made up their minds as best they could in the light of educational science, and have based their recommendations upon these decisions. In other cases, where such decisions were difficult, the various possible methods have been presented impartially and left to the judgment of the reader.

Much of the material in the book has applications to other subjects besides geography. The introduction of such general material has been made consciously, with the hope that the more specific applications to geography would be clarified and given greater effectiveness if presented in the light of fundamental theories as to school instruction.

The book is intended to serve as a text in teacher-training courses, and is therefore supplied with somewhat more than the usual amount of teaching material at the ends of the chapters, particularly in the way of questions for discussion and objective tests. The tests are not intended primarily for measurement, but rather as study guides for persons using the book and as aids to the teacher in conducting the class.

The nature of the original investigation was such as to make it extremely difficult to give credit to all sources from which materials have been assembled, since much of the material was derived directly from interviews and may have come to the attention of the persons interviewed by means of their contacts with published matter on the teaching of geography. There has necessarily been a considerable use of published materials in a way which makes it extremely difficult to cite authorities by means of footnotes.

Thanks are due to the numerous geography teachers who so graciously gave their time in personal interviews and who contributed the results of their experience, as well as to the numerous authors of books and articles whose material has been drawn upon in the preparation of this textbook. The names of these authors are given at the ends of the various chapters throughout the book.

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MODERN METHODS IN TEACHING GEOGRAPHY



CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL TRENDS IN GEOGRAPHY TEACHING

THE teaching of geography in the United States has experienced a rather noticeable process of evolution. Aims and methods in the subject are quite different at the present time from what they were a century, or even a few decades ago. The present chapter, based on a study of some two scores of geography texts, used at various times in American schools, and on what various historians have recorded concerning the history of geography teaching, summarizes briefly the main trends and movements which have characterized the teaching of geography in American schools.

Trend from memory to thought. The most striking change in geography teaching has been the shift from memory to thought as the principal purpose. All earlier books were decidedly of the memory type; many of them, in fact, were organized on the question-and-answer basis, and were to be studied in the same way as the catechism. Others of the early books were

organized more on the type of an encyclopedia, being classified compendia of information. There were enormous masses of facts concerning boundaries, capitals, products, exports and imports, and other statistics, all to be learned largely by rote memory. These facts were to be learned and recited by the pupils, and the teacher's task was to see that they were memorized.

As contrasted with this type of work, the more recent tendency is to make geography a rational instead of a rote subject, and to stress causal relations and principles instead of definitions and facts. The introduction of problems and exercises which call for thinking is a noticeable factor in the more recent books. The various phenomena of nature, and the geographical factors in different parts of the world, are now studied in relation to each other, rather than as if each were an independent unit and ruled by laws all its own. This study of geography as a related whole involves a search for general principles and for explanations of the fundamental laws governing man's relations to his environment. In other words, to borrow an expression that has been used frequently, geography has changed from a "graphy" to a "logy." That is, it has changed from a mere description of what is, to an explanation of why it is that way.

Decline of emphasis on place geography. It has been said that early geographies were largely of the mail-clerk and ship-captain types; that is, they were

primarily concerned with the locations of the various geographical units. This place geography has been crowded back gradually, with the passing of time, and instead of it there has grown up a considerable amount of emphasis on the more functional aspects of the subject. For example, instead of learning where the Mississippi River is, the newer tendency is to learn how it behaves, why it behaves that way, and how its behavior affects human problems in the Mississippi Valley. When maps first began to be published as prominent elements in geography books, the tendency was to devote an enormous amount of space to questions based on them, such as: What country is north of Afghanistan? There is noticeable, at the present time, a very wholesome tendency to avoid this error.

Increased emphasis on home or local geography. Some of the earlier geography books seem to have been written with the hope that they would be used as texts by schools in various parts of the world, if we may judge by the generalized way in which they treated the different geographical units. For example, they gave as much emphasis to China as to Mexico or England. There seemed to be no particular portion of the world that was considered as a starting point, and around which the study of the rest of the world was to be organized. In fact, the various countries of the world were sometimes treated in alphabetical order, rather than by any plan that showed definite relationship. The same tendency is noticeable, in some of the earlier

books, in the treatment of the various States in the United States. One State after another is described, but the order either is alphabetical or seems to be one of pure chance.

A few of the earlier books, however, avoided this common early error. For example, Goodrich's *System of Geography*, published in 1836, began with a map of the floor plan of the classroom, then gave a map of the town, and gradually expanded outward to the State, continent, and world. The later books by Guyot embodied something of the same idea, but with more emphasis on the study of physical environment and types. Still later, under the influence of the teachings of Pestalozzi as interpreted by Francis W. Parker, considerable emphasis was placed on the local environment as the center of emphasis. The Committee of Ten, in 1893, further recommended that geography study should begin with observation of local land formations, and that each school should have a large map of the community and of the State, in addition to the usual maps of the world and of the United States.

Tendencies toward greater concreteness. The early geography texts were extremely abstract. For example, the first question in the book might be, "What is the earth?" and the answer following it would be, "The earth is a terrestrial ball." The expense of engraving maps and pictures was considered prohibitive, and consequently there was not even a picture showing the earth as a sphere revolving in

space. The child was simply obliged to memorize the words, whether they aroused any definite meaning in his mind or not.

The publishing of maps as integral parts of geography texts, which became common after about 1850, went far toward making concrete the child's ideas concerning places and spatial relations, and the later practice of including pictures of people and objects in distant lands helped children tremendously to imagine things which formerly were presented in a purely abstract way. The movement that got under way about 1890, largely under the influence of Francis W. Parker, to study geography out in the open by direct observation of nature, was a further development toward the concrete. At the present time, we find a fourth type of effort to secure greater concreteness, namely, the use of lantern slides, stereoscopes, models, and visits to geographic museums. Much of this tendency toward the concrete is due to the influence of Pestalozzi, and his emphasis upon teaching the child through his senses and by means of object study.

Changes regarding the use of maps. The early books contained few maps, or none at all. It was not uncommon, in fact, to publish a geography text of the vest-pocket size, and then to publish an atlas or booklet of maps as a separate unit. The early maps, too, were ordinarily printed only in black and white, and showed coast lines, rivers, mountains, and towns. Sections of the world in which towns were few or un-

known were sometimes supplied with small pictures of the animals which roamed wild in those regions. With development in the art of printing, more maps came to be published in the books, and later these were printed in colors to show the boundaries between States more clearly. Still later on, the refinements of the map makers' art made it possible to represent altitudes, climatic conditions, contours, etc., on maps. The discovery of the large possibilities in map study then led to an overemphasis upon mere place study with maps, and to an overemphasis of map drawing by pupils. The reaction against the extremes of map study and map drawing seems to be rather noticeable at the present time.

Tendency to make geography interesting. The older texts seem to have been written with the assumption that they were to be studied in a spirit of effort, rather than in a spirit of interest. For the most part they were extremely dull. It is very difficult to conceive of a school child's getting very much enjoyment or pleasure from the study of these dreary volumes. The more recent books, however, are written with a very keen recognition of the child as a living human being, and they show a very definite effort on the part of the author to win the child as an interested reader. The pictures are well selected on the basis of their appeal to the child, and the reading matter is different from that which would ordinarily be written for adults. There also is a strong movement toward geography of